

## EMBROIDERED HOUSE AND TABLE LINEN.



Fig. 1.

NE of the latest additions to the beauty of our household surroundings, is the revival of embroidered linen. Both in France and England it has quickly become popular, and the adoption of the Russian embroidered and worked towels is the freshest and prettiest of all the new ideas for bed-room decoration. These towels are used in Russia as a sort of blind, to cover from the general view the half-soiled towels in daily use, as they hang on the towel-horse, and form a disfiguring adjunct to the prettiest *chambre à coucher*. Their use in England has been extended to the ordinary towel, which is frequently embroidered and trimmed after the designs of the fair mistress of the mansion. "I shall never invite her on a visit to me again," said an irate leader in what is known as "high art fashion," the other day—"she shut herself up in her own room the whole morning, while she was with us, and copied all my towels!"

Outline-stitch, Russian embroidery, and chain-stitch are used, as well as crewel-work, for these towels. The first three are done in red and blue ingrain marking cotton, and the last in coloured crewels. The general method is to purchase the bordered towels, and outline the pattern on the border, in ingrain cotton; the ends are always fringed, trimmed ends having, to all appearance, gone entirely out of date. If the diaper or huckaback be purchased by the yard, from a piece, the towel itself must not be less than a yard and a half long; five inches being allowed at each end for fringing-out. Our illustration (Fig. 1) shows the appearance of one of these towels when

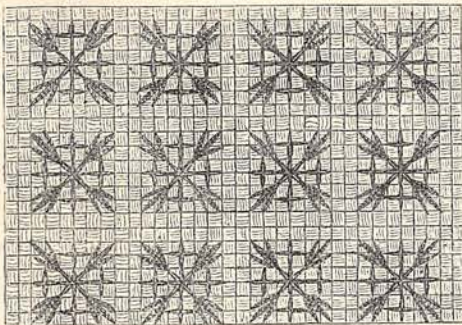


Fig. 2.

finished. Fig. 2 shows one of the Russian embroidery stitches, which simply consists of a series of long stitches, put in so as to form a pattern. This design is for use on ordinary huckaback, and may be worked in alternate squares of blue and red ingrain cotton.

The fringe of these towels is knotted, as seen in the illustration, and the chain-stitch sewing machines embroider very well for this kind of ornamentation. A running pattern, or a scroll design, must first be traced on the material, and then it can be gone over with the machine, leaving the chain-stitch for the right side of the towel. The outline-stitch may be worked in eight different ways, but it will not be needful to mention more than two, one of which is illustrated in Fig. 3; the other stitch would, in church embroidery, be called "couching." It consists in sewing a coarse thread down, at equal distances, with a fine thread. The old Saxon work, the most beautiful of all embroideries, generally has the design outlined in this manner; the interior being filled up with lace stitches, executed on the material.

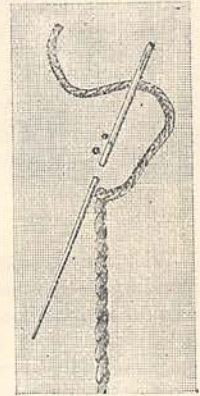


Fig. 3.

Holbein embroidery is also very pretty when both sides of the material are required to be alike—in other words, when there is no wrong side. It is really one of the outline-stitches, although it is unusual to class it with them; it is worked over a certain number of threads, always leaving the same number exactly between each stitch, thus making both sides of the work precisely alike. Square or geometrical designs are most suited to it, but any pattern may be carried out when once the worker is accustomed to it. I have been thus careful in mentioning the stitches in vogue for embroidering table and house linen, so that my readers will quite understand the various descriptions given, and the manner of executing them. The monogram of the owner, or the initial letter of the family name, is invariably embroidered on linen in satin-stitch, with either white or coloured cotton. For serviettes it is usually put at the corner, for table-cloths at one corner, or in the centre of each side, so that it hangs over the edge of the table. The monograms for table-cloths are very large; the same style and design is used of a smaller size for the serviettes of the set, for the side-board, and tray-cloths. Some of the table-cloths and serviettes are fringed at the edges all round; this fashion, however, does not appear to have "taken" very generally. The new French designs for table-linen deserve mention. They consist of large and rather fantastic-looking birds, embroidered in the corners with threads of various colours, and even represent natural scenes, such as the Chinese gathering in the tea-harvest, and Japanese costumes, or habits. The borders woven round ordinary table-linen are sometimes so pretty, that merely outlining them in red ingrain cotton is a sufficient decoration; and the serviettes and sideboard-cloth can be worked

in the same manner. A table-cloth and serviette thus treated and fringed at the edges are illustrated in Fig. 4.

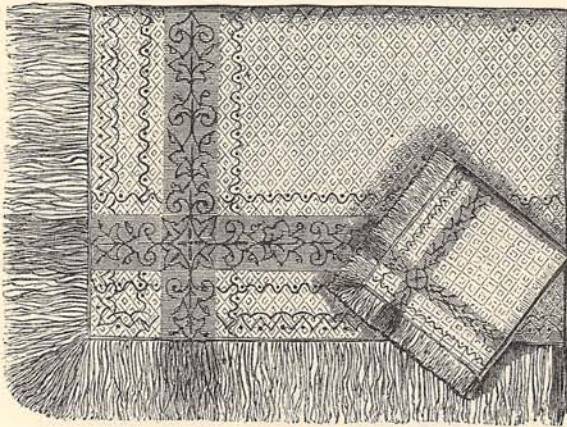


Fig. 4.

What may be almost called the "sampler" style of working linen must also be mentioned, as to those who do not feel inclined to attempt anything difficult it offers an easy but very effective decoration for towels or table-linen. In Germany this style of cross-stitch is used on linen sheets for ornamenting the ends that turn down over the bed, and even in the very poorest houses you find the bed-linen more or less ornamented. The method of working is to tack a strip of canvas on the material, and work the cross-stitch with ingrain cotton, and afterwards to draw out the threads of the canvas. For linen the canvas is hardly needed, the threads being both sufficiently visible and even, and the idea is so simple that any one can weave the little squares and zig-zags for themselves as they work. Fig. 5 gives a small border

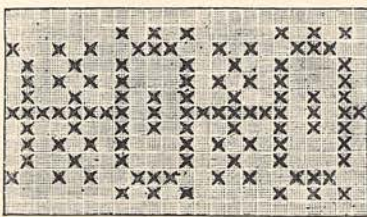


Fig. 5.

pattern, which many of my readers may recognise as a familiar old friend on the antiquated but recently revived sampler. The return to fashion of the primitive style of marking linen in cross-stitch, as it was done fifty or sixty years ago, was inaugurated by the new Needlework Code, and the scholar in a Board school has now her sampler, and works it as conscientiously as her grandmother and great-grandmother did before her. Marking-inks prove occasionally such disappointments, and work such direful mischief to the material upon which they are used, that one cannot regret the return of the old fashion. Children's fingers are very clever

at doing little stitches of this kind, and now that we have so decidedly made a move towards the useful in girls' education, we shall require all the interesting needle-work we can find to keep them sufficiently occupied. Another method of decorating house-linen is afforded by the application of another ancient fashion, that of "drawn work," which consists in drawing the warp threads of the towelling or linen, and obtaining a pattern by binder threads, in the same way as hem-stitching is done. When the weft threads are also drawn, a cross-barred design can be produced, and by the use of darning lace stitches and binder threads form an open embroidery, which was much used for ecclesiastical purposes in Italy, Spain, and Portugal, and is still practised as a national industry for women in Brazil, and the other states of South America, where they do it with such skill that it becomes quite worthy of the name of lace, which they bestow upon it. Of somewhat the same nature as this is the old German "cut-work," of which a fashionable ladies' journal has lately given a sketch. This consisted in cutting and drawing both warp and weft threads, so as to leave the pattern drawn on the linen, a solid design, in a groundwork of quadrangular meshes.

In America, what are known under the name of "pillow and sheet shams" have long been in use. They really are embroidered or handsomely trimmed covers, put over the pillows of the beds by day, and over that part of the sheet which turns over. The general method of manufacturing them is to use Victoria lawn, or linen, with lace-edged frills. The linen is cut to the shape of the pillows which it is intended to cover, and the sheet "sham" is about half a yard wide by two yards long. These articles, however, would not find much favour in the eyes of Englishwomen, who use their bed-rooms much less than American ladies do, and who do not turn down their beds until the night, keeping both pillows and sheet covered up by the white or coloured quilt, which is spread over all.

In England, two fashions seem at present in vogue—the first is to have a cover, to lay over the quilt, of crétone or chintz, of the same pattern as the hangings of the bed; the second idea is to have this kind of cover composed of a white sprigged or spotted muslin, with frills of the same, or lace, and lined with silk to match the prevailing tint of the room. The first of these fancies I think horrible; and if the crétone used be a dark-coloured one, there is neither light nor brightness left in the room when the attractive whiteness of the bed is covered up. I can quite understand, however, that to those people who, in this smoky London, are obliged to study economy in washing, this fashion would prove a decided god-send.

In Figs. 6 and 7 examples of the embroidered bed-linen are shown, which is now used both in England and France. They are done in satin-stitch embroidery, and are intended for use, not for "shams." Great quantities of this work have always been done in France by the peasants of the Vosges mountains.

There is nothing really new under the sun. Even while I write my description of the embroidery of 1877, I am reminded of Sir Gardner Wilkinson's drawings of the Egyptian

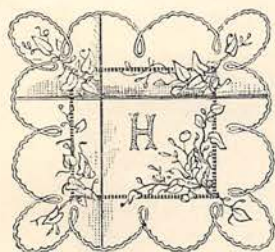


Fig. 6.

embroidery is worked, and the meshes form the outline of an irregular design of cubic shapes. The stitches used are nearly the same as the long stitch now called Russian embroidery; and one cannot help pondering over endless questions of "hows" and

"whens," as one gazes at the labour of hands which crumbled into dust 3,000 years ago. No, I forgot; they did not crumble into dust in Egypt, for their remains, still in preservation, grace our museums to-day. If they could have foreseen it, I should think, the embalmer's art would speedily have gone out of fashion. But, in spite of her being a mummy (one of the ugliest of things), I looked with softened eyes at my sister-woman's work, and hope she never found a resting-place, with her embroidery—an exile and a show—under the gilded ceiling of the Palace of the Louvre.

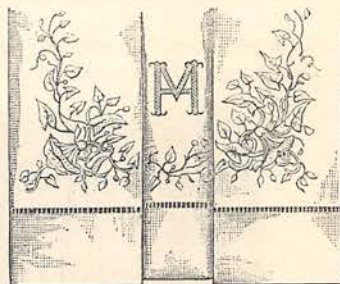


Fig. 7.

DORA DE BLAQUIÈRE.



## THE CHILD AND THE MAN.

(CONTRAST No. 2.)

**D**OWN in a noisome alley foul with grime,  
Where vice holds nightly carnival of crime,  
One of Christ's ministers beheld a child  
In rags and dirt, uncared for, running wild,  
Dwarfed, stunted, ugly, with long tangled hair  
And eyes that glinted with a cunning glare;  
Divine compassion moved the good man's heart  
To try and win this child by that pure art  
Which is God's gift of power to the pure;  
That power prevailed; by slow degrees but sure  
The poor young pariah was drawn away  
To join a humble school, where work and play  
Skilfully blended with words wisely kind,  
Aroused the latent powers of his mind.

The pastor left the city. Thirty years  
Went sailing by with freights of smiles and tears,

With broken hopes, and projects unfulfilled,  
False joys, foul wrongs, and warm hearts dulled and  
chilled;  
But o'er the good man's head, now bent and white,  
Each year in passing shed some holy light;  
More smiles than tears still shone upon his path,  
For "more is given to the wise who hath;"  
Not all his projects failed, not all hopes broken,  
Not vain his deeds, not vain the good words spoken;  
Still all these years had vanished like a dream,  
When once again the old man joined the stream  
Of modern life in London; clear and bright  
And ever eager to rejoice in light,  
Whene'er fair Science oped her temple doors  
And her high priests poured forth the wondrous stores  
Of brilliant knowledge patiently obtained  
And freely given, although hardly gained,